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Second cycle of review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS: National reports

Note on the national reports received in the framework of the second cycle of review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS

This document, prepared by the secretariat, summarizes the current status of the reporting about implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS). It provides an overview of the numbers of reports received, their timelines as well as some preliminary findings.

Note on the national reports received in the framework of the second cycle of review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS

I. National reports as part of the second review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation

To follow up on implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS), both adopted in 2002, countries were asked to report on progress made in implementing these framework documents for the first time after five years, in 2007. Country reports were collected and compiled into a regional report that was published together with the proceedings of the Ministerial Conference "A Society for all Ages: challenges and opportunities" which took place in León, Spain, in the same year.[1] The tenth anniversary of the adoption of MIPAA/RIS in 2012 will be marked with a Ministerial Conference under the motto "Ensuring a Society for All Ages: Promoting Quality of Life and Active Ageing" in Vienna, Austria. To prepare discussions at this Conference, the second review and appraisal cycle has been launched in May 2011, asking countries to report on developments since 2007 based on a set of guidelines.[2] The deadline of submission expired on 31 October 2011. The UNECE secretariat has been receiving the reports and provides access to them online.[3] It will be analysing the reports and request clarifications or additional details where necessary. A matrix has been prepared to structure information received and to be able to compare the status of implementation in different areas, bringing out areas with most extensive activities as well as gaps. Based on this analysis, a synthesis report outlining trends within the region will be prepared, the first draft of which will be available in March 2012 as a basis for discussion in the Bureau of the UNECE Working Group on Ageing. The final report will be presented at the Ministerial Conference on 19-20 September 2012 in Vienna.

This note serves to provide the Working Group on Ageing at its fourth meeting on 21-22 November 2011 with a first overview of reports received. The Working Group is invited to provide suggestions for the preparation of the synthesis report.

II. Status of submission

By the deadline of submission, 31 October 2011, seven of the 56 UNECE member States had submitted a report on implementation of MIPAA/RIS. By the date of the Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Ageing, 21-22 November 2011, a total of 19 reports have been received.

Eleven countries indicated that they have found it difficult to submit their reports in time due to different factors and they have requested late submission. Complexities around involving different ministries and departments as well as consultations with external parties such as NGOs were found to be time-consuming suggesting that in future reporting cycles it may be pertinent to allow for more time to prepare the reports. In some instances the required approval from different levels of hierarchy before reports

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[1] UNECE 2008, A Society for All Ages: Challenges and Opportunities, http://www.unece.org/pau/pub/mipaa.html.

[2] UNECE 2011, Guidelines for Reporting on National Follow-up to the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/_docs/age/2011/Policy-briefs/Guidelines_on_National_Reporting_in_the_Context_the_2nd_R_A_Cycle_EN.pdf.

[3] http://www.unece.org/pau/age/mica2007/country_reports_2011.html

could be submitted officially or translation procedures caused delays. Countries are encouraged to submit outstanding reports as soon as possible, preferably before the end of the year 2011, so that the material can be included in the analysis for the synthesis report.

Reports could be submitted in any of the three official languages of the UNECE – English, French and Russian. The majority of reports were submitted in English, three were received in Russian.

III. Comprehensiveness

The guidelines suggested that reports be around 6000 to 8000 words long (12-16 A4 pages). Most reports were around 30 pages long, not counting annexes. Some countries have benefited from the opportunity to provide additional material, such as national ageing plans, information about laws and regulations, programmes and institutional set ups, good practice examples or indicators and data sheets as annexes.

The guidelines suggested a general structure for the report to which most countries adhered, with some deviations. All except two countries provided an executive summary as requested in the guidelines. When prepared according to the guidelines, it proves to be an extremely useful entry point to understanding main achievements and challenges as well as the methodology of preparing the report. Countries are encouraged to still provide an executive summary of their reports, based on the guidelines, if they have not done so already. Countries whose reports are still outstanding are strongly encouraged to include the executive summary.

The guidelines request information about the methodology of how the report was prepared both in the Executive summary and in a separate chapter. Most countries provide information about the methodology used in preparing the report, although with varying degrees of detail.

Most countries, except three, included the requested chapter providing an overview of the national ageing situation. This chapter is useful for the reader to be able to judge the general level of the ageing situation in the country, including some of its specificities, as a basis for interpreting the measure outlined in response to it.

Most countries structured their reports following the logic of the RIS commitments which is useful for comparability of reports. One country report followed a different logic of topics which makes it extremely difficult to compare with other countries. One country chose to report on only on one commitment which causes additional difficulty with respect to comparability between commitments (e.g. different importance ascribed to different commitments). In that case the report also lacks the general overview in terms of main overall challenges and achievements and priorities for the future.

Based on a more in-depth analysis of the reports by commitment, the synthesis report will aim to identify areas that have witnessed extensive activities as well as gaps that would warrant additional efforts. In general, reports outline achievements and areas of activities and many, but not all, have attempted to also highlight areas where difficulties and challenges remain. Countries with outstanding reports are encouraged to clearly identify areas of challenges and gaps. This information will provide an important basis to shape activities of the UNECE secretariat and the Working Group on Ageing for the post-2012 agenda, ensuring that they correspond to actual needs.

All countries except two have provided their vision of future activities on MIPAA/RIS implementation. Most countries focus on activities at national level. However, it would be useful to bring out more strongly the desired role for international cooperation in the UNECE framework and beyond, too.

Only one country shared very explicitly a list of good practice examples in the annex. Other countries are encouraged to share such lists, which can be integrated into the

UNECE good practice data base. If not listed explicitly in the annex, countries do share many good practice examples within the report as part of the reporting of the implementation of the commitments, although with different levels of detail.

IV. Methodology

The guidelines for preparing MIPAA/RIS implementation reports suggest a combination of quantitative and qualitative sources with quantitative data coming from existing studies and qualitative data reflecting a bottom-up participatory approach. It is encouraged to seek interactions with stakeholders for preparing the report, e.g. different ministries, civil society, private sector and academia. In particular, older persons themselves should be involved in assessing the impact of policy actions on the quality of their lives.

Countries have generally based their reports on existing material available in printed or electronic format, such as research expertise, recently prepared plans or reports and statistical data available from official sources. National focal points on ageing or the Ministry in charge of ageing have involved other related ministries or government departments, commissions, committees or other advisory bodies in charge of ageing. Some countries report having invited inputs from government at decentralized levels. At least six countries have explicitly mentioned inclusion of views from civil society representing older persons or individual older persons when preparing the report. One report makes special reference to having consulted with young people as well. Several countries report consultations with scientific experts, private sector and international organizations. A few countries have used focus group discussions or hearings to seek inputs from stakeholders.

V. Preliminary findings

Countries generally report progress on implementation of MIPAA/RIS. There have been visible efforts to develop national ageing strategies and plans that cover a broad area of topics thus promoting mainstreaming ageing. Several countries also reported having established new institutions to discuss ageing from a cross-cutting perspective.

Some areas are of particular concern and have been referred to repeatedly by member States. One such area is developing employment strategies that reflect the new realities of ageing societies. It is an area where countries report achievements but also acknowledge that activities have to be ongoing. Among the priority areas are measures making it attractive for employees to work longer as well as providing incentives for employers to keep older people employed. Countries have reported efforts towards adjusting workplaces to the needs of older persons. Several countries have worked on strategies for life-long learning to keep the ageing workforce well-adjusted to changing realities at the workplace, although implementing such strategies remains a challenge in some places. At least one country has abolished incentives for early retirement. Another mentioned carrying out entrepreneurial programmes. Several countries mentioned the effects of the global economic crisis as one factor increasing unemployment. Stabilizing the economic situation in general was therefore found to be an important challenge.

Another area of major concern in several countries was adjusting the pension and social protection systems to ensure minimum subsistence levels and avoid poverty in old age. In view of the economic crisis, several countries have found it difficult to uphold levels of payments in these areas. Considerable efforts have gone into making pension and social protection systems sustainable. At the same time, this remains to be one of the major challenges. At least two countries mention work on adjusting the systems so as to better reflect needs levels, for example by striving towards better means-testing.

Many countries have also prominently addressed the area of health and care provision. Several member States have been striving towards better integration of health and social services, in particular to achieve integrated concepts of long term care. New long-term care strategies have been devised in some countries but major challenges remain in terms of realizing them. Challenges are found particularly with regards to supporting informal care givers, especially in the family, and in providing home-based care services to prolong independent living of older persons in need of some levels of assistance. Several countries have increased availability of and access to care services thanks to greater involvement of civil society and private sector as service providers.

Achievements and challenges were reported by some countries in different areas of health, especially the need for prevention, providing good access and quality of medical services, training of staff dealing with older persons and provisions to ensure the rights of patients. A few countries have mentioned measures to avoid violence and abuse.

In addition to these main areas of concern, a number of other issues were raised that will need attention in future. Several countries will invest in awareness raising, in combating ageism and in changing attitudes, for example with regards to longer working lives. Some countries have paid more attention to gender-related activities, to achieve more equality, to address the specific situation of women often living longer than men and in terms of gender budgeting. Among other issues mentioned were the provision of affordable and adequate housing and public transport. Measures towards cultural and political participation were pursued to enhance participation of older persons in society. Several countries intend to further develop the volunteer sector to enhance social inclusion. One country suggests investing more into further developing the 'silver economy'. Some countries count on ICT solutions to enhance possibilities for independent living. Several countries have made efforts to increase skill levels in using information and communication technology among older persons. One country specifically mentioned the challenge of migration.

Several countries have seen a need to further enhance monitoring and evaluation of MIPAA/RIS and ageing policies in their countries. They see a need for better indicators and would like to improve policy-making based on such evidence.

Overall, a major challenge across the board is implementing those policies and strategies that have been developed in many UNECE member States over the past five years.

VI. Conclusion

The national reports received are an important source of information about the status of on MIPAA/RIS implementation in the region. The UNECE Secretariat encourages member States to submit outstanding reports before the end of the year. For countries still preparing their reports, the UNECE Secretariat would like to suggest closely following the structure proposed in the guidelines, in particular the division into RIS commitments. Some of the issues raised in the commitments may be overlapping, in which case it is suggested to cross-reference between chapters. Countries are advised to make clear reference to the methodology used in preparing the report. They are also asked to identify major achievements as well as challenges and gaps. Countries should also consider ways of highlighting good practice examples.

Countries should think about their vision for the role of international collaboration in the framework of the UNECE Working Group on Ageing to make best use of this infrastructure during the following years. National Focal Points on Ageing are encouraged to provide comments and suggestions for the development of the synthesis report during the meeting of the Working Group on Ageing, 21-22 November 2011.